



Easy Returns Make For Happy Holidays

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MADISON – Buying a holiday gift for a loved one? Here’s a peculiar holiday shopping tip: think ahead about the possibility of the gift being returned BEFORE you buy it. Seems like a strange idea, right?

But if you consider that even the best presents get returned or exchanged sometimes (think issues with size, color, style, etc.), planning ahead can be a great help to a gift recipient.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection asks shoppers to pay close attention to the different stores’ policies while they shop, to ask for gift receipts at the register and to keep all sales documentation organized and accessible throughout the holiday season.

“Return and exchange policies vary from store to store, and can even vary within a store based on the type of product purchased,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “Understanding a business’s policy and keeping receipts on file is the best way to ensure that you or your loved ones don’t face disappointment at the return counter if there is a problem with the gift.”

Remember to keep your receipts handy and to pick up a gift receipt at the time of purchase. Before you wrap the item, pack the gift receipt in the box or tape it to the front or side of the box to ensure that the recipient doesn’t overlook it. Some stores will not honor a return or refund request without a receipt.

“A gift receipt can mean the difference between a smooth return and a pounding headache,” said Frassetto. “Giving this document to your gift recipient is a simple and helpful courtesy that can save them time and ensure that they get the best value back for the item.”

Additional return tips include:

- Stores are required by law to honor the return guidelines they represent to consumers. If the store’s policy is not posted, ask a salesperson or manager about the terms before making a purchase.
- Pay attention to the time frame allotted by the retailer for returns. Find out if the countdown to the last day for returns begins on the date of original purchase of the item or if there are extended holiday return deadlines.
- As you’re wrapping gifts, leave the price tags and UPC codes intact and keep the original packaging. Some stores charge a restocking fee for opened items or those without their packaging – especially electronics.
- Understand any conditions that apply when you buy items on sale or clearance. Some stores may not allow you to return these items.
- If you are shopping by phone or online, find out who pays return shipping fees if you have a problem with the product. Does the retailer pay those fees or does the consumer? Are return shipping fees deducted from the refund amount?

If you believe a retailer is not honoring its posted return policy, file a complaint with the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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